CINEMA QUARTERLY

Volume 3, Number 4

SUMMER

1935

THE NEWS that George Cukor, director of *David Copperfield*, *Little Women*, and other box-office successes, has been given a new contract for three years, with a salary of approximately £50,000 a year, is being widely interpreted as an indication that the director is coming into his own and at last receiving the recognition that is his due. And, coupled with the fact that stars' salaries are steadily declining, the inference is that the studios are beginning to think that the picture matters more than the personality of the star, and that the man who makes the picture matters most of all.

The champions of the script writers, who believe that a good scenario—the theme, the idea, the purpose behind the film—is the most important creative force in production, will stoutly contest this argument. Others, with perhaps greater perception, will deplore the whole situation as farcical.

A good director is of immense value in interpreting the scenario in terms of plastic image, composition, movement, sound—always dependent, however, on the expert assistance of camera-man, art director, recordist, and the host of other specialist collaborators. The results of his labours we admire on the screen in proportion to the physical reaction of our senses. But the argument of the film, the deeeper significance of its thematic qualities, its approach to reality, its philosophy, are the outgrowth of studio conferences and company policy. If the director has little claim to creative achievement, the scenarist, surveying the final form of his script, changed and distorted at the hands of numerous executives, has even less.

Are we, then, giving the director greater credit than he deserves? The answer—a frequent one in cinema—is yes and no. Actually the work of a capable director and the technical experts under his command is the only quality of value in the average commercial film. But so long as his efforts are based on present methods of scenario construction and producer interference it is foolish to magnify his importance beyond the limits of his power. The fact remains that no one at present is directly and finally responsible for a film as an artistic whole.

Unless the director can be given full control of production, with responsibility for the scenario, it would be wiser, instead of increasing his apparent but ineffective importance, to limit his scope to that of strict interpretation. With sound, music and colour playing increasingly important parts in production it is well-nigh impossible for the director to be master in every sphere, and the specialist, who must be artist as well as technician, is acquiring growing responsibility. Some one, necessarily, must take control of all these elements, weld them into a harmonious whole, fitting the director into his specialized niche alongside the musician, the colour artist, the camera-man, and so on. The obvious person for this task is the producer, whose apparently nebulous function has always been something of a mystery to the filmgoer and a recurring source of irritation to the serious film-maker. But to take charge of the artistic unity of a film the producer must be a very different person from the average studio executive concerned primarily with the financial returns of commercial investment. He must be himself an artist, able to visualise the film as a whole. He must be the heart, the soul of the film. Whoever else constructs the scenario, he it is who must conceive it, give it life. He must be able to play on the talents of his specialists as a musician plays on the keys of a piano.

When a director is elevated to such a position only then can he claim to be the creative genius of the film.

Yet would the appearance in the studios of this new type of creative producer materially alter the character of production? If we believe with Arnheim that the artist has already been reduced to absolute subservience to the grossest of commerical ends, it is obvious that the film, instead of developing in artistic significance, will remain as a social phenomenon of greater danger than value to mankind. But though the abject dependence of the craftsman is obvious and deplorable, it need not be concluded that the basis of production will not alter nor that the means and methods of film-making will not undergo vital changes. Only so long as no one has the final responsibility for the measure of a film's worth—only so long as the director is sufficiently swollen with pride and salary to accept a puppet position of authority—will the present tendency continue.

In the independent documentary field the producer has aready proved the artistic necessity of his presence. Without question it is even more necessary in the studios. But how is the new role to be created? As a result of the increasing complexity of production the studios, either unwillingly or blindly, may themselves create the opening. Or the new movement to increase the importance of the director's position may give such artists as have the necessary abilities and strength of character the opportunity of seizing

power. True, the present financial reward of subservience is so great that all but the strongest minds are tempted to accept the situation with luxurious complacence. But with the growing recognition of the potentialities of the film new men will enter cinema, not in quest of lucre but to satisfy their artistic urge or their social conscience. A change in the character of studio personnel might readily pave the way for revolutionary changes.

To accept the present structure of cinema as inevitable and final is a defeatist attitude. To pretend that it is other than it is, or that it is not inimical to worth-while achievement is either hypocrisy or stupidity. Whether we are interested in the æsthetics of the cinema or in its social implications we must face the situation free of cant or illusions. The constructive criticism of laymen and the forward Æsopean tactics of film-makers must all be directed courageously towards moulding a freer, a more rational system of production which will enable the artist to be honest with himself and sincere in his aims.

NORMAN WILSON.

C.Q. AND WORLD FILM NEWS
IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

A FURTHER advance in the development of "Cinema Quarterly" will take effect in the Autumn, when the paper will appear in an entirely new form.

Arrangements are being made for a well organised INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE from the world's principal centres of production.

The new publication, which will appear MONTHLY, will be a clearing-house for all the latest information on the films and film people that matter, and will be in general a forum for theory and criticism.

Hans Feld, formerly editor of the Berlin "Film Kurier," the most famous film paper in Europe, has joined the editorial board.

The management of "Cinema Quarterly" have adopted this progressive policy in deference to the needs expressed by both film workers and film societies throughout the country.

WORLD FILM NEWS AND CINEMA QUARTERLY will supply an essential service of international importance. It will be something new in film journalism and will be supported by authoritative contributions from leading film-makers and critics throughout the world.

TWO PATHS TO POETRY

JOHN GRIERSON

THE MOST interesting event in recent months was, for many of us, the arrival of Paul Rotha's *Shipyard*. I shall not pretend to review it, for I am too close to these films to worry about the particular value of this or that. What concerns me, and I hope some others, is where they are leading. In documentary we are in course of making not individual films or individual reputations, but new ways of looking at the life about us. We are bringing new material to the imagination. Movements, and schools of approach, are everything. And there is something sufficiently distinct in Rotha's work to mark it as a separate tendency: distinct at once from the romanticism of Flaherty, which all the young men have now respectfully discarded, and from the hard-boiled and certainly more academic realism of the G.P.O. group. I shall try to analyse this Rotha quality and estimate it.

Forget all about Rotha's writing when you consider him as a film-maker. He is, as every student of film appreciates, our film historian; and he is the keeper of our conscience as much as the keeper of our records. On questions of film movements and film influences of the past he is an analyst of quality.

As a creator of film he happens to be none of these things. The history of his subject matter does not concern him nearly so deeply as its good looks in still and tempo. Analysis of his subject matter —of the influences which affect it and the perspectives of social and other importance which attend it—is not so important to him as the general impression it gives. For lack of a better title I should call him an *impressionist.*

The other day Clive Gardiner, the artist, was asked to do a painting of that grand machine which twists wires and makes cables. He told me afterwards that what he went for was the feeling of electricity and that in fact he "painted the shimmer of the thing." So did Monet; so did all the other impressionists; and brilliantly, as anyone who has seen the new Monet rooms in Paris will testify. Great mural stretches there are, four to the immense oval of each room, pouring into the subdued light the deep shimmer of trees and pools and waterlilies. This was impressionism, till the old tough Cézanne broke into the shimmer, teased out the forms again and gave them solid structure. No one, however, in noting the change

of attitude, could deny the separate and authoritative inspiration which impressionism represented.

Many of us, brought up in the post-impressionist revolt, have made structure our god. "Observe and analyse," "know and build," "out of research poetry comes," were the slogans we set before us. They suited the academic and the radical in our minds. They brought us more readily to the new material of our times.

I have watched with some closeness the working of these influences in the films of Wright, Elton and Legg. All are painstakingly and rather proudly academic. When they shoot a factory, say, they learn how to ask the right questions. Elton, for example, knows more than a little about railways and mechanics; Wright has mastered the history of every subject he has touched; and I will swear that Legg knows more about the organisation of the B.B.C. than any outsider decently should.

Critics have not failed to notice the tendency. "Close Up," that ancient citadel of the æsthetes, spotted it from the first. In æsthetic righteousness they deplored this concentration on the didactic. They sniffed a long and authoritative sniff at the pedagogic in art. With equal sniff but less authority the boys and girls of "film art" followed them. I, for one, always liked the criticism for, so far as it goes, it means well and means rightly. The only point at which art is concerned with information is the point at which "the flame shoots up and the light kindles and it enters into the soul and feeds itself there." Flash-point there must be. Information indeed can be a dangerous business if the kindling process is not there. Most professors are a dreary warning of what happens when the informationist fails to become a poet.

But note the reverse of the argument. Information there must be or there is nothing to kindle. New information there must be or we are kindling to no purpose. And that is the task and the danger these others have set themselves.

If they have not always found an æsthetic flash-point in their researches into the social and economic structure, they have at least been looking for it. I remember when Elton's *Aero Engine* came out, how these very critics lit on the last reel of flight. It was a poem, they said, but why all the laborious business before about aero engines? They missed the point and missed it twice. In the first place any fathead could make a poem of flight, but it was a more difficult and more necessary thing to make a poem as Elton did of the making of the mould. For many of us, there is no depth to the poetry of flight unless the making and the moulding are realised behind. The smoke at the chimney stack is one thing and a fit vision for children. The smoke above the furnace is something else.

And again a point. Analysis itself, if it be fine enough and

affectionate enough, will sometimes achieve a flash-point by its very affection. The making of a mould is as fair an example as any. There have been more ambitious sequences of furnace work, rhythmicised and tempo'd to beat the band. They are all—Ruttman's, Flaherty's, Iven's, Rotha's and my own—vulgar in comparison.

So much for the informationists and what they represent. Rotha's *Shipyard* brings us back with something like full measure to the old position—for impressionism and against analysis, for art and against information, and no one will say his case is not finely made. The other people were critical and had no creative power to back them, though they very plaintively tried. Rotha is certainly creative. He comes equipped with a great splendour of camera work. He has a force and fervour of tempo'd description better than anything before him, for he has known how to use sound to intensify his impressions. He joins with the other school in his industrial background and sociological implication and, if he had freedom, his sociological implication would be even plainer than was permitted in *Shipyard*. In these matters Rotha is certainly on the side of the gods.

Yet, when the splendid flurry is done, are the bones of the ship in the film—are the wash and the width of the sea it will sail? Is the man who planned her there?—are the orders he gave?—is the shaping of the ship to the blue print of his knowledge and purpose? Does the fo'c'sle head rise high with purpose willed and form made to a purpose? Is it enough to make a poem of men hammering and building and forget the precision of a rivet?

The energies are certainly there, caught, indeed shimmering, among the rising ribs of the colossus. The voices are there, in broken scraps of calls and conversation. The tools are there in hot bursts of riveting and beating and turning. Something of the town behind them is there and the houses they came from, and the unemployment they will go back to when the job is done, and something, too, of their thoughts. A great deal is there: shimmering all of it as the sunlight of fine photography flashes across plate and hammer and screw. But—and I ask this detachedly that the case may be understood—is it really a ship that goes down to the sea or only a hunk of art? The case of the others is that the art is better if it is also a ship.

In any case it is of the greatest value that Rotha should reach out separately in this way, and of the greatest importance that his growing point should prosper. It may be that two separate arts are involved and that we must look to the development of both. The one is cold and, with power, may yet be classical; the other is rhetorical and may yet, with power, be romantic. But this is certain: in our realistic cinema, all roads lead by one hill or another to poetry. Poets they must all be—or stay forever journalists.

THE NEW DEAL AND THE AMERICAN FILM

F. D. KLINGENDER

THE FRIGHTENED bourgeois retires to a dream world in his leisure moments to escape from the terrors of a reality filled with the battle-cries of contending classes. He is left to speculate on the abstract attributes of that fictitious shadow "man in general." This shadow without substance moves in a phantom world of abstract emotions and passions, hopes, ambitions, disappointments and successes.

The films produced in Hollywood up to the end of the Hoover presidency played all the possible variations of this seductive tune. We can understand the shock to a public for whom this type of subject appeared as the only possible one for a film, when the basic class reality of modern existence was for the first time unmasked in the post-revolutionary Russian film.

Before 1932 the occasions when American producers discarded the Hollywood wish dream sphere in favour of a subject even remotely connected with social reality were exceedingly rare. Films such as *Five Star Final*, and especially *I am a Fugitive from the Chain-Gang*, exposing some particular example of social injustice with passionate sincerity, were altogether exceptional.

All this, however, rapidly changed with the advent to power of the Roosevelt regime, the function of which was the extraction of American capitalism from the extreme depths of the crisis. To understand the changes that have occurred in the American film since that time it is necessary first to appreciate the significance of their economic and political background.

The crisis had hit America with full force after a protracted period of illusionary prosperity which appeared to vindicate the claims of super-capitalism to have within itself the possibility of providing a prosperous existence for all.

The first phase of the crisis, before Roosevelt was elected, rudely shattered this illusion and brought unparalleled distress to an immense number of people who had previously accepted it for gospel truth.

The first task of the Roosevelt administration was, therefore, the deflection of mass indignation, then at its highest, from a criti-

cism of the capitalist system as such to that of particular aspects of that system, such as banking, market speculation, etc.

N.R.A., the great campaign embodying this policy, achieved its initial popularity through the wide measure of apparent social criticism which it contained. Having succeeded in its primary aim of converting mass opposition into support for the new administration and its head, the Roosevelt campaign gradually changed its character in subsequent years. As ever larger numbers of workers were disillusioned, as an unprecedented strike wave began to sweep the country, the demagogic mask ceased to serve its purpose, and the true class character of the regime appeared undisguised.

I shall attempt to show that this basic reality is reflected with astonishing clarity in the American film of the last few years. It appears very doubtful whether the changes that have occurred in the character of these films can be explained otherwise than by reference to this reality.

The first thing to note is the sudden and most surprising intrusion of the social problem into the fantastic realm of the Hollywood film that occurred shortly after Roosevelt was elected to the presidency. This intrusion was not confined to the sphere of one or two highbrow films, but, on the contrary, was most pronounced just in those films that were destined to appeal to the masses.

I shall select a few examples at random to illustrate this point.

The "Wild Western" was, almost from the inception of the film, one of its most popular subjects. In the *Massacre* this well-worn cliche suddenly assumed a startling new form. The Indians of this film are no longer the romantic warriors of the schoolboy adventure story, but the wretched, universally exploited survivors of a once vital race found in the Indian reservation areas of the United States of to-day. The hero is no longer the scalp-hunting chief, but a young Indian earning his livelihood as a trick rider at the Chicago World Fair.

This hero returns to his native home, and the astonished spectator is, from that moment, presented with a hair-raising series of actions showing the most callous, brutal, and hypocritical exploitation of the Indians by the government administrator who cheats them of their property rights, the doctor who utterly neglects them, and the undertaker who forges their wills and rapes their daughters, while the priest conducts a farcical burial ceremony for their fathers.

Needless to say, the bravery and valour of the hero is now displayed in fighting this racket. In the course of this struggle he assaults the undertaker, who has raped his sister, and is placed under arrest by the government official. He contrives, however, to escape with the help of the heroine, who, of course, is a beautiful Indian

girl, and after various adventures reaches Washington. The first shot of his arrival shows him jumping off a freight car and facing a N.R.A. poster on the wall of a station shed, over which the dome of the capitol is visible.

In Washington he finds a true friend and the future saviour of his down-trodden people: the supreme official for all Indian reservations, whose self-sacrificing struggle for the rights of his exploited wards has so far been frustrated on every side by the graft and iniquity of the powerful interests who are opposed to his aims.

The case of our hero provides this official, for the first time, with tangible proof on the basis of which he can proceed to clear up this morass of graft and iniquity.

The description so far given of this film would suffice to indicate its character, were it not that one exceedingly important point of the Roosevelt campaign is put across in a highly effective manner in the subsequent section of the story. For, while the senate inquiry initiated by our hero's friend is in progress, the assaulted undertaker dies of the wounds inflicted by the hero, who is thus taken back to the reservation area in order to face a murder trial. Everything depends on the production of his sister as a material witness, and, of course, this girl is kidnapped by the racketeers. Once this becomes known, the Indians, who have been roused from their previous lethargy by the fight put up on their behalf by their countryman, gather their forces and storm the gaol. But at this point the hero, once he is released, uses his entire influence to persuade them of the folly of mass action, arguing that, by taking this course, they merely expose themselves to the machine-guns of the authorities. He then proceeds, with the help of his faithful attorney, to look for his kidnapped sister.

Naturally she is found in the end. The corrupt officials and racketeers are duly punished and the hero is installed as the new, honest, administrator for the reservation area—after which it is clearly his duty to marry the heroine.

This most exciting film, built up with all the speed and tension of the Hollywood thriller, thus put a number of very important points of Roosevelt's propaganda campaign across wide masses of cinema-goers. By selecting the economically entirely insignificant group of exploited people represented by the Red Indians, it could safely go to extreme limits in showing the full degree of their exploitation. Imagine the results if its subject had been the American Negro—not to mention the white working class. . . .

The suffering of these people is shown to be due, not to any inherent feature of the social system in which they are forced to live, but to corruption and graft on the part of influential racketeers. The solution of their ills can be brought about by a strong man

who places honesty and love for his country above private gain; at the same time it is folly for the exploited to fight for their freedom. Patience and trust in official leadership are the only safe means open to them.

I have described this film at some length, because it is a first-rate example of a highly skilful propaganda film. While not all the films of the first Roosevelt era were as skilful and effective in their propaganda technique, the basic propaganda character of their overwhelming number was, nevertheless, patent for all to see.

It is sufficient to mention films such as *Dangerous Age*, dealing with the problem of America's "wild boys" tramping through the length and breadth of the American continent in a vain search for work. Again the subject is treated with astonishing frankness, though, of course, not with the same brutality as in the case of *Massacre*. But from the propaganda point of view *Dangerous Age* is a much less skilful film than *Massacre*, since the end, in which the heroes of the story are rescued by a benevolent magistrate who finds jobs for them, is so obviously out of tune with the picture drawn by the remainder of the film that it can scarcely be convincing even for the most unsuspecting.

On a different level the spectacular Fox chorus girl show, *Stand Up and Cheer*, belongs to the same category of Roosevelt propaganda films. The story, which provides the skeleton for the series of Hollywood parties and revue scenes characteristic of the "musical comedy" type of film,is in this case that of a new official who has been entrusted with the organisation of a big "Joy Trust," in order to dispel the gloom of the crisis with lavishly organised entertainments. The story of the film is the story of the fight between this official and the powerful vested interests in the entertainments rackets who, of course, employ every means to frustrate the fulfilment of his task. Needless to say, he defeats these sinister influences after many adventures, puts over a grand show, turns the universal gloom into optimism, and thus enables the country to turn the corner towards prosperity.

Altogether incomparable with any of these pictures were a number of exceedingly interesting films also produced during the first phase of the Roosevelt presidency films, the obvious aim of which was a scarcely veiled criticism of capitalist society. I am referring to a number of James Cagney and William Powell films, in which these actors represent racketeering business men with astonishing cynicism.

The first Mae West film, with its glorious demolition of the last fragments of bourgeois morality, belongs to the same group. All these films are objectively an expression of a genuine left wing criticism of present day society. They were allowed to pass by the

American censorship authorities in view of the concessions necessary to left wing feelings in those years.

No one who has seen American films, even if only occasionally, can have failed to notice the decisive change in their character that has taken place during the last eighteen months or so, and that has completely altered the picture so far described. The first and most striking change is the abrupt disappearance of the genuine social criticism film. Could there be a more striking contrast than that between the first and the second Mae West films? You will remember the sheer delight of the scene in *I'm no Angel* in which Mae West in full war paint swaggers in syncopated jazz step across her room accompanied by her gargantuan negro maids. In *Belle of the Nineties* the negro maid has become the saviour of her mistress's soul, for she is asked by the star to pray for her at a revivalist meeting!

Those who see in this change merely the result of the so-called purity campaign, will find it difficult to account for the no less striking change which has come over the Cagney pictures released during 1934. If in the earlier films the gangster racketeer was assuming the unmistakable features of the capitalist business man as such, this clarity and precision of outline has entirely vanished in the later films (e.g. *He was her Man*). With it has vanished, as in the case of Mae West, all the vitality and tempo of the earlier productions.

If we turn from the left wing to the centre and right, the changes found are equally significant. They can be characterised as changes from extreme social demagogy over an intermediate stage of mystical hero-worship back into the sphere of bourgeois "entertainment" proper, the sphere of love, hate, adventure, success, etc., in the abstract, without any trace of social reality.

The intermediate stage is characterised by films, the objective basis of which is the problem of fascism. It is highly significant that the attitude of the producers to this problem as presented in these films imperceptibly changes from that of criticism to more or less open support. The series *Duck Soup*, *Viva Villa* and *Cat's Paw* illustrates this transition.

Characteristically enough the present phase, in which the social problem has entirely vanished, as far as the intention of the producers is concerned, commenced with a rage for so-called costume pictures. The flight from social reality was thus initiated by an escape from the conditions of to-day into those of the past.

In the films released during the last few months the return to the realm of pure fancy is complete; but instead of its former delights that realm to-day spreads the ennui of a conjuring trick endlessly repeated after its secret has been exposed.

Note.—I attach without comment the following extracts from a review of the American film, *Night Life of the Gods*, taken from the London "Cinema'

"NIGHT LIFE OF THE GODS.—Once upon a time a famous author named Thorne Smith wrote a book, conceived in a moment of delicious delirium and written in a cuckoo clock. The first chapters convinced us he was crazy. The ensuing left doubt that possibly we were. . . . *Night Life of the Gods* brings a brand new type of humour to the screen, completely inconsequential in nature and as far removed from everyday life as the craziest nightmare. It has always been claimed for films that their chief function should be to take people out of themselves and to provide entertainment as different from the everyday routine as possible. I think that, to a great extent, this view is correct, and therefore I say without hesitation that, bearing this in mind, *Night Life of the Gods* is magnificent screen entertainment. To describe the film in a few words is impossible. As one American critic wrote, 'It is a picture that is completely but pleasantly goofy, with cast and director seemingly purposely insane, but with no one caring, as fun percolates from their antics.' That just about sums the picture up. It has an irresponsibly crazy air about it that is disarmingly delightful. It transports audiences to the wildest realms of fantasy where nothing at all matters."

●

Kinofilms have now reduced to sub-standard size, Alexander Room's famous film of the South American oilfields, *The Ghost that Never Returns*. This will be given a London premiere in the early part of September and will be available for booking from September 15. There will also be available shortly *October*, Eisenstein's famous film of the October revolution, Dovjenko's *Earth* and *Arsenal*, Ermler's *Fragrance of an Empire*, *Turksib* and *The End of St. Petersburg*, on 16mm. non-flam stock. Prices are now standardised at the rate of 4s. per reel per day, which brings the hire charge for these famous films to the same level as the ordinary films distributed by sub-standard libraries.

THE FILM CRITIC OF TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

RUDOLF ARNHEIM

IT HAS taken a long time for film criticism to develop into something other than the second string of the local reporter, or the dramatic or literary critic. What was lacking was expert knowledge, an æsthetic theory of the film and, in the case of the newspaper editor, the idea that film criticism might be something more than an editorial return for cinema advertisements. Then, when at last film criticism did get to work with its own ideas, i.e. ideas appropriate to the film, when it had reached a satisfactory intellectual level, and conquered a place in the newspapers equivalent to that occupied by dramatic and artistic criticism, the art of the cinema, after a brief period of blossoming, had begun once more to wither away, and to-day the chief error of the film critic is precisely that he judges films in the same way as his colleagues do pictures, novels and plays.

It is true that in the fifteen years or so during which the art of the cinema developed, it was unusual to find a true work of art, even in conception, but the film critic would, at that time, have had the opportunity of observing, of noting and of commenting on so rare, so exciting a process in its separate stages, so that his colleagues must have envied him that opportunity, even though in their own spheres long-standing artistic tradition ensured the production of works purer in aim and higher in standard. Here was a form of art in process of development. Here, from what was originally a purely mechanical method of photography, means gradually emerged of presenting the artistic quality of reality. And this experiment, the first of its kind, was so valuable for æsthetics that, at least to begin with, the experiment itself was far more important than the question, vital for the final judgment of the phenomenon, to what height the new art might be developed (whereby it seems to us that the question whether or not the cinema can be an art at all is wrongly framed and should be rather to what degree it can become an art).

Even if, in former days, there seldom appeared a pure work of art, whether as regards aim or achievement, at that time almost every new film meant, in a scenario motiv, cutting or in lighting effect, an advance in the development of the new visual language, and to take note of this should have been the task of the film critic. But

film criticism in general was not ready for this, and so the opportunity passed by almost entirely neglected.

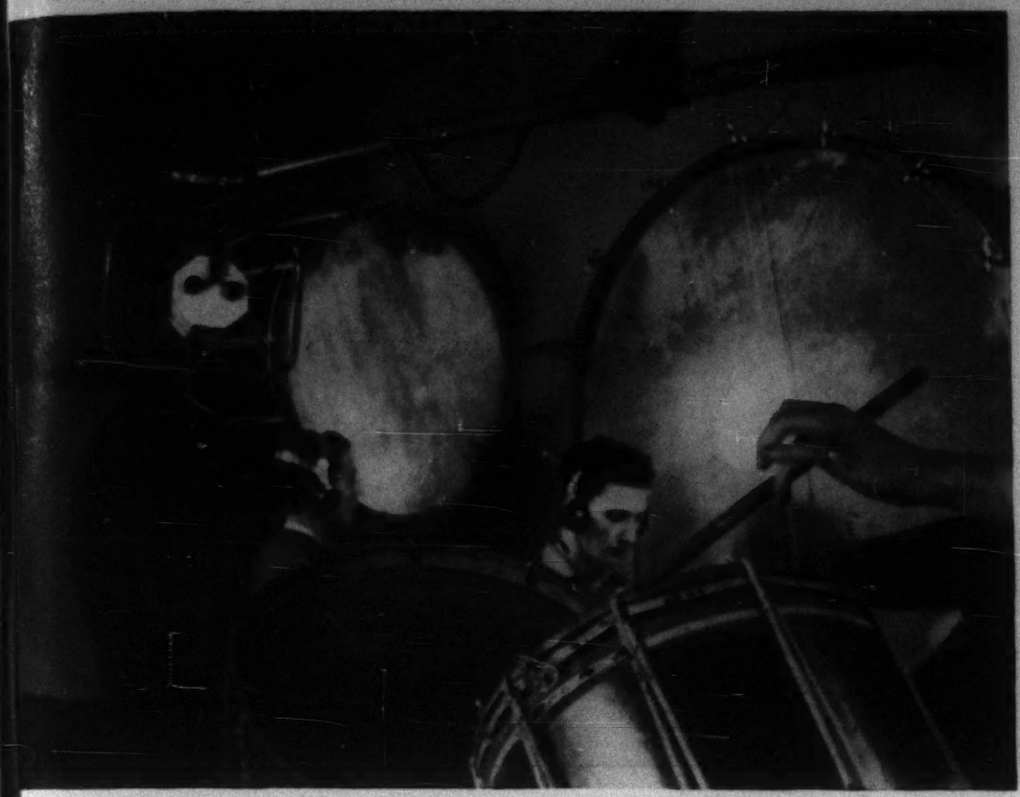
Artistic form is not a luxury, not an ornament nor an accessory, but serves to express the subject, the action; and so, because of the limitations imposed by the absence of speech, there had developed, in the film, artistic means of making plot, characterisation and background comprehensible through the eye. In this way they had arrived at a special kind of mute pantomime, at the transformation of inner motives of action into visible ones, at the creative resources of the film-camera, and at montage. With the advent of the talking film the need for the use of all these vanished.

And not merely the need, but, to a great extent, the possibility. Certainly there was now available, from the purely external, practical point of view, a more convenient and direct means of conveying information regarding plot, character, background; but word and picture was each in itself so comprehensive a means of representation that, used simultaneously, they could not supplement, but could only prejudice and mutilate one another.

The resulting development, the decline of the film as a means of artistic expression, is not yet complete. It, too, is exceedingly interesting from an æsthetic point of view, and is, therefore, worthy of closer attention from film critics. Points worth considering would be, how, under the influence of dialogue, movement loses its importance, individual scenes are drawn out and so montage falls into disuse; how the travelling camera tends to predominate, the actor usurps the scene, external action declines in favour of the spoken word. What the talking film has begun, the colour, the plastic, the supersize film and direct transmission of actual scenes by television will complete.

Unfortunately the majority of critics are unaware of this state of affairs. They realise that the cinema is artistically unproductive, but not that this is inevitable. They lay the blame on individual producers and directors as if the possibility of good talking-films really existed.

One of the tasks of the film critic of to-morrow—perhaps he will be called the television critic—will be to destroy the ridiculous figure cut by the average film critic and film theorist of to-day; he, like a seventy-year-old court actress, lives on the glamour of his memories; like her, he rummages among faded photographs, speaks of names that have long since vanished. With others like himself he argues about films which, for ten years or more, no one has been able to see, and about which, therefore, anything, or nothing, may be said; he discusses montage, as medieval scholars discussed the existence of God, and believes that all these things could exist to-day. In the evening he sits, reverently attentive, in the cinema,



From "B.B.C.—The Voice of Britain," a John Grierson Production.
Above—In the effects room at Broadcasting House.
Below—The control room.

Courtesy G.P.O. Films and H.M. Stationery Office

From "Amphitryon" a Ufa film directed by Reinhold Schünzel.
The settings are by Herlth and Rohrig.
Camera: Fritz Arno Wagner.

playing the critical friend of art, as though we were still living in the time of Griffith, Stroheim, Murnau and Eisenstein. He thinks he is seeing bad films, instead of realising that what he sees is no longer a film at all.

All such theoretical studies would be splendid if they were consciously carried on as theoretical, or purely historical, research. They are ridiculous whenever, as usually happens, they are presented as models for modern film production. We know perfectly well that sometimes even now, and to-morrow the same will be true, in the hands of an advanced worker, of a seeker after documentary, a real film does come into existence. But the newspaper critic has to do not with such exceptions, but with the ordinary production of the day, and this can be subjected to æsthetic criticism only when, whether bad or good, it may, in principle, be included in the realm of æsthetics; i.e., when it has the possibility of creating works of art. Formerly good films differed from mediocre ones only in quality, to-day they are outsiders, relics, things essentially different in nature from what normally passes through the cinemas.

Many a critic, since write he must, takes refuge in irony, contents himself with a few jokes more or less good, and with detailed criticism of the acting. Is there nothing better for him to do? Undoubtedly there is! The film critic of to-day ought to bear in mind his second great task, a task laid upon him from the beginning, but for neglecting which he had, once at least, the excuse that æsthetic criticism could justly claim most of his space and interest. We mean the consideration of the film as an economic product, and as the expression of political and moral opinions.

Films are made by manufacturers as goods intended to bring in as large a profit as possible on what they cost; i.e., they must be so made that they find as many consumers as possible. Nevertheless, formerly one found frequent cases where the manufacturer allowed the artist, commissioned by him, a certain freedom in the choice of material and in the execution of the work, hoping that, because of, or in spite of this, the film would achieve financial success. But every business organisation aims at perfecting itself, at excluding uncontrolled factors, and so the film industry has, in course of time, reduced the artist more and more to a mere machine for supplying what the "producer" with his keen flair for "what the public wants" tells him to construct.

In all this we have in mind the most highly developed type of modern commercial film production, especially the American, and we are leaving aside, for the present, those cases where authorities, governments, organisations, etc., attempt to impose some other impulse on the commercial one. In industrialised production it is far more enlightening to know what company has made a film rather

than what director. Modern directors are less and less distinguishable from one another, and modern actors likewise.

The average film critic of to-day knows this state of affairs quite well in theory, but in practice he criticises the style of George Cukor, and becomes absorbed in the psychological peculiarities of Joan Crawford, without realising that these figures, even if nature should have endowed them with some degree of artistic originality, are condemned, at least in their practical activity, to absolute dependence. The director is reproached with having failed to bring out, in "his" scenario, the characteristic elements of the background. The combination of a particular director and a particular actor is considered as an artistically motivated event whose causes ought to be investigated and judged. In an essay, which appeared recently in a review and which certainly contained hints of the real connection between cause and effect, Mamoulian was blamed for having allowed himself to be influenced by the "innocent vanity" of Greta Garbo. Almost simultaneously there appeared, in a German newspaper, an interview in which Greta Garbo said: "You ask whether I am satisfied with the Christina film? No, not at all. How could you think that? If I had had any say in the matter it would have been quite different. But what one would like oneself is never realised. I shall never act the part of which I have dreamed." We are concerned here not with a defence of Garbo, but with the fact that such a film could not be made by director and actress, whether they consented and were enthusiastic about it, or whether they were repelled by it, and forced into it, in any but the way in which it was made. The only general reproach which might be made against an artist is that of binding himself to such methods of production. To judge a film as the free work of artists, like a novel or a painting, when nowadays even a queen among actresses may not settle at what angle her eyebrows are to be placed, conceals, in a harmful manner, the true state of affairs.

Equally inadequate is, for example, the fashion, widespread at present, of criticising historical films. Variations from historical truth are pointed out, and the author of the script, director or producer is judged as if he had failed to study his sources properly, or as if, whether from pure caprice, from misunderstanding, from lack of objectivity, or possibly from the wish to further some special artistic or scientific idea, he had departed from the truth, he is criticised just as the author of an historical novel or play, or of a scientific historical work would be criticised. In reality the producer, advised by experts and supplied with excellent documents, probably knows the historical circumstances better than the critic, and has not the slightest intention, in the construction of his film, of giving rein to his whims, his lack of understanding or his personal

views. A factory is no place for such passions. Every alteration of history is, rather, exactly like every alteration in the film version of a novel or play, a carefully calculated economic measure intended to make the film more suitable, more attractive, more interesting, more magnificent, more exciting for the public. In these films there is far less caprice than in the works of many an artist or man of science. They are made according to well-tried rules, and, from the outline of the plot to the gestures of the hero, everything is subservient to the same end.

As long as the critic is ignorant of this, or remains silent on the subject, his criticism is worthless. It is worthless as long as he continues to distribute praise and blame in individual instances and to individual persons, without realising that films become what they are because of certain general laws.

First law: The talking-film as a means of representation, excludes the possibility of artistic form.

Second law: Films are made as a commercial proposition, in such a way that they may sell as well as possible.

Third law: The film is less the expression of individual opinion than of general political and moral views.

In connection with this third point, we must add that, in those countries which are governed according to a definite doctrine, the governments of to-day emphasise, in a most useful manner, the political and moral content of the film. Unhappily the film critic does not yet adequately support them in this. He fails to see, for example, that the average American film, which appears to him merely artistically negligible and silly, becomes extremely interesting as soon as one regards it as characteristic of what appeals to the masses.

Whether a film is intended by the producer to appeal to the mind of the people, or whether, under the influence of the authorities, it is employed as a means of propaganda or of education, it must always be the task of the film critic, to-day as well as to-morrow, to analyse its content, and to assess, positively or negatively, its value.

The film is one of the most characteristic means of expression and one of the most potent influences of our age. In it not only individuals but nations, classes, forms of government play an active part. The critic of to-day, unfortunately, continues, all too frequently, to act as if the cinema were a small luxury theatre in which a few independent artists are acting for a limited number of people interested in art. Such a critic of to-day belongs, alas, to yesterday.

NEW TRENDS IN SOVIET CINEMA—II

MARIE SETON

THE optimistic and liberal vein of Dinamov's speech, which represented the official Communist view at the Moscow Cinema Conference in January, was a signal that the cinema workers could and even should express some frivolity in their films. With the improved material conditions Soviet audiences have developed a desire to be entertained as well as educated by the cinema. Romance is no longer bourgeois, love is an eligible theme in place of being an occasional decoration to the one of socialist construction. Handsome actors playing romantic Red soldiers and attractive blondes are replacing natural types; characters are individual rather than typical. Humour is an important component of story pictures.

The first director to speak at the conference was Eisenstein; he was stating his position publicly for the first time since his return from Mexico.

He divided the history of the Soviet cinema into three periods:

1917–22.—The few films made were under the influence of the theatre. 1922–29.—The period of the epic films which were based on montage and the use of natural types. Since 1929——

Eisenstein considered that during the second period movement sometimes became the content of the picture. Technical virtuosity was cnaracteristic of the period. The use of natural types—typage—was developed because the cinema was in the hands of the technical intelligentsia who became infatuated with the masses and, therefore, thought that typage was the most actual way to represent a class from whom they were apart. "We may criticise all the tendencies," said Eisenstein, "but every tendency is the tendency of the period itself."

He analysed various pictures and stories, including *The American Tragedy*, which he conceived as a study of the negative twentieth-century man. He showed how ideas profitable to capitalism could be embodied in exotic stories and the nineteenth century thrillers of Fennimore Cooper. He spoke of form and content, citing the film *Counterplan* in which the white nights had been effectively used to heighten the tension of the love scenes and how inseparable form

and content were among primitive people, illustrating that by the Polynesian tradition of opening all the doors and gates during a confinement in order that the surroundings should assist the action.

"Our knowledge of composition is very poor," he continued. "Some people think it is sufficient to make pictures; but we must find expressive things. In the intellectual cinema there was form and content, though we had too many isms and these isms wanted the monopoly of art. My art is dedicated to no particular tendency, but to the analysis of certain phenomena and ways of thinking."

Eisenstein concluded by saying that he felt that at present Soviet art and architecture shows an inclination to return to the classical while everywhere there are signs of synthesis and a demand for greater artistic value.

Trauberg, co-director with Kusnetsov of the films *Alone*, *New Babylon*, and *The Youth of Maxim*, was the next to speak. He demanded that Eisenstein should put his theories into practice, declaring that cinema theory is not a matter of scholastic articles, but the struggle between one group of cinema directors and another. He considered that the film magazines were not serious enough, and that some of the articles appearing in them were a museum of fantastic illusions. He attacked formalism, saying that the only way to be rid of that bugbear was to produce pictures.

In Trauberg's opinion, Eisenstein's division of the Soviet cinema into three periods was too conventional, and though he agreed that 1924–29 was the great period of the Soviet cinema, he considered that during those years many mistakes had been made. He criticised the lack of character in Pudovkin's hero of his St. Petersburg film, and Dovzhenko's unconvincing hero in *Arsenal*. He condemned what he called "the stupid poetry" of the period—Eisenstein's "side-lines" in *October*, the palaces and statues, the obviousness of *General Line* and Pudovkin's shots of moulded ceilings and statues at the end of *St. Petersburg*.

And of the cinema since 1929, Trauberg discussed a number of interesting but imperfect pictures which are unlikely to be seen abroad. Of his own work with Kusnetsov, Trauberg said that, during the making of their last film, *The Youth of Maxim*, they had solved many problems in spite of the fact that they were obliged to alter the script during production. He felt they had rid themselves of formalism, and thought the method of setting the individual against the social background of the period quite satisfactory. He deplored the attitude of people who consider all historical pictures as bad and those with contemporary themes as good; though most discussions centred on films with contemporary subjects, the Soviet cinema had in actual fact mainly utilised historical material. In the future Trauberg felt that he and Kusnetsov must deepen the meaning of

their work and pay more attention to detail. He said they were averse to obvious technique. The greatest tribute paid to *The Youth of Maxim* (an historical picture) was Pudovkin's when he said he felt that the fields would soon belong to the collective farm, and his opinion was echoed by a group of young workers. "That," said Trauberg, "is the emotion we wanted to create."

Another young director who spoke was Utekevitch, collaborator with Ermler on the film *Counterplan*. He belonged, he said, to the second generation and came to represent the great army of cinema workers. "I don't think," he said, "that the Soviet cinema is only made up of heroes like Eisenstein and Dovzhenko." Like others, in the early days, he had found it difficult to get into contact with his audience; he had thought them stupid and in need of being raised to Flaubert's "ivory towers." The intelligentsia had failed to understand the political aim of the cinema and that all art is fighting. He liked American pictures because they appealed to a great public, for in the best meaning of the word the cinema is a popular branch of art.

Utekevitch, being one of the first directors to see the importance of cinema actors as opposed to natural types (*Counterplan* is largely an actor's picture) analysed Pudovkin as a delineator of character, saying that *Mother* was comprehensible to everyone because it was a picture about people. In *St. Petersburg* Pudovkin's style changed and real people became symbols, then he denied the necessity of the scenario and later actors gave way more and more to natural types; finally, in *The Simple Case*, Pudovkin created a new theory, the importance of the cadre. In *Deserter*, Utekevitch felt that Pudovkin only expressed human emotions for one moment—the scene in which the German widow cries when she is elected as a worker delegate.

Because he is mainly concerned with the making of films requiring professional actors, Utekevitch spoke of the training of special film actors. He felt that the role of the actor is most important, for if they lack understanding and experience they can change the whole idea of the film. Though every Soviet director has an individual method of working with actors (and it is one of the most difficult branches of their work) there is actually very little theory in regard to cinema acting itself. There is also the relation of camera-men to actors; Utekevitch found that in his experience very few Soviet camera-men could shoot men's behaviour, which he felt to be more dynamic than inanimate things.

Utekevitch ended his speech by estimating the value of Pudovkin, Dovzhenko and Eisenstein to the second generation of directors. Of Pudovkin he said that when he and his generation criticised him they were struggling for and not against him. He

felt that there was danger in making Dovzhenko a model, for his particular way of creating films was peculiar, while his ideas were sometimes better than his work. He wished to fight for the genius expressed in Eisenstein's pictures, but he felt that Eisenstein, the teacher and theoretician, was often at fault. His speech was full of unproved theories and his work lay only in the laboratory; and lastly practical Utekevitch considered that Eisenstein was not close enough to reality. Turning to him he said something to the effect that "You are richer than all of us, but you are sitting on your own gold." Eisenstein, who was acting as chairman, merely smiled.

The most important speech of the conference because it combined theory with practice was Dovzhenko's, which will be summarised on a later occasion.

THE FILM ABROAD

DR GOEBBELS' SEVEN PRINCIPLES

AT THE closing session of the International Film Congress, 1935, Dr. Goebbels, the German Minister for Public Information and Propaganda, delivered an address on the specific laws of film art, in which he enumerated the following seven principles ruling German cinematography:

1. The film, like every other form of art, has its own laws. It is only by obeying these laws of its own that it will be able to preserve its true character. These laws are not derived from the stage. The primacy of the stage over the film must be broken. Stage and film each speaks its own language. What is still tolerable in the dim light of stage scenery is completely unmasked in the glaring light of the Jupiter lamps. It is an artistically vital question for the film to break away from stage tradition and stand on its own feet.

2. The film must shake off the vulgar insipidity of a mere form of amusement for the masses, but in doing so it must not lose its strong inner connection with the people.

3. This does not mean that it is the function of the film to serve the purposes of a colourless æstheticism. On the contrary, it is just because of its unprecedentedly far-reaching range that it, more than all other forms of art, must be popular art in the best sense of the word. But, popular art must present in artistic form the joys and sorrows that affect the great masses. Hence the film must not

stand aloof from the hard realities of the day, nor lose itself in a dreamland only existing in the imaginations of unpractical producers and scenario writers living in a non-existing world.

4. There is no art that is self-supporting; material sacrifices made to art are repaid by it ideally. For every government it is a matter of course to finance great state buildings in which the architectural creative will of a period is immortalized in stone; it is a matter of course to subsidize theatres in which the tragic and comic passions of this period are represented; it is a matter of course to establish galleries in which the pictorial cultural possessions of a people are housed. It must be just as much a matter of course for every government to secure the artistic existence of the film by material sacrifices, unless it gives up all idea of treating the film as art or of giving it a position as such.

5. The film must remain contemporary, in order to have a contemporary appeal. Although it may take and obtain its subjects for treatment from other countries and distant historical epochs, its problems must be adapted to the spirit of the period, in order to be able to address the spirit of the period.

6. The film, developed on these rules, will not separate but form a bond between the nations who, proud of their individuality, express this individuality in the film. It is a cultural bridge between the nations; it promotes understanding among them because it assists them to learn to know each other.

7. It is the function of the film to achieve its effects by its own inherent honesty and naturalness. Empty pathos is just as alien to it as the trashy theatre tricks with which it was heavily burdened by its stepmother, the stage, on its life's road, but which merely represent irksome baggage that does not belong to it. The honest and natural film which gives animated and plastic expression to our period can become a valuable means for the building up of a better, purer and more realistic world of artistic possibilities.

If these fundamental principles are observed in the film, it will conquer the world as a new artistic manifestation. It will then be the strongest pioneer and the most modern spokesman of our age.

In the light of Dr. Goebbels' manifesto it is interesting to consider Ufa's 1935-36 production schedule, since issued. Of the twenty-six feature films—planned to "relax, fascinate and entertain filmgoers" —at least eight are musicals or light comedies, seven are conventional love romances or dramas, one is a detective thriller, and one is a musical biography of Chopin. Five may or may not have a strong social content.

But whatever may be the value of the themes chosen under the new German film regime, there can be no doubt that the techinical

quality and surface polish of current production is of a remarkably high standard. *Amphitryon*, a Stapenhorst picture directed by Reinhold Schünzel and featuring Willy Fritsch and Kathe Gold, is one of the most ambitious of recent films. It is a comedy and the action takes place in classical antiquity. In addition to everyday men and women of the period the cast includes gods and goddesses such as Jupiter, Mercury and Juno. It is particularly notable for the grandeur of the architectural settings designed by Robert Herlth and Walter Rohrig, and for the photography of Fritz Arno Wagner. The musical director is Franz Doelle, one of the best-known of the younger German composers. He has attempted something new in film operetta, and has made the characters use a sort of rhythmic speech-song. He adapts his music not only to the action but to the camera. Musical undertones and overtones are used to harmonise with and complement every shot without interrupting the rhythm of the musical score as a whole.

Wonders of Flying, a new Terra film featuring Ernest Udet, the famous German flying ace, contains an abundance of beautiful and thrilling shots. The film was photographed simultaneously from several angles—from the towering tops of ice-covered mountains and from a plane. In addition an automatic camera was mounted on Udet's machine. Weather conditions made production specially difficult. Round Zugspitzo high winds were encountered, with changes of temperature up to 30 degrees. Both cameras and camera-men were at times unable to work. In addition, scenery photographed one day would be ten feet under snow the next. Udet's dare-devil flying creates a thrilling spectacle on the screen.

One of Germany's most famous camera-men, Karl Hoffman, who photographed *The Nibelungs*, *Faust* and many of the early classics, has been made a director. At the Jofa studio he is at present at work on a new Minerva-Europa musical production, *The Primary Rules of Love*.

An important item of information is the news that Bernard Shaw has consented to the production of a German film version of *Pygmalion*. Jenny Jugo will take the part of Eliza, the flower girl, and Gustaf Gruendgens, of the Berlin Staats Theater, will play Professor Higgins.

THE AMERICAN SCREEN

HERMAN G. WEINBERG

THE SUMMER of 1935 will have been memorable in the cinema world, as such things go, for the introduction of colour in the feature film. *Becky Sharp*, from Thackeray's "Vanity Fair," with Miriam Hopkins, directed by Mamoulian, was the vehicle used to introduce colour to the screen in the same significant proportions that marked *The Jazz Singer* as the first talking picture. Whether the relative success of *Becky Sharp* (of course, we have already had no less significant colour in the short *La Cucaracha*, also devised by Robert Edmond Jones) strikes the death-knell of the black-and-white film, the next six months or so will tell. I think colour will supersede black-and-white—not because the present development of colour adds materially to a picture (in stories of to-day, with the characters in everyday street attire, there would be little difference, after a reasonable while, between colour and black-and-white to the spectator), but because after five or six years of the talking picture, the movie moguls of Hollywood will probably feel the time is ripe to introduce another novelty on the screen to inject new life-blood to the film. The colour film will, no doubt, give the movies a new impetus, whose momentum will carry it along for another five or six years until that novelty wears off—then, three dimensional films and television.

When Mamoulian allows for some movement in an otherwise static picture (such as in the whirling dancers at the Duchess of Richmond's ball, on the eve of Waterloo), the screen goes riotous with flaming scarlets, bright splashes of yellow and blue, soft greens and deep blacks with voluptuous visual beauty. Otherwise the colour tends to the chromo picture postcard variety, and in the long shots is actually blurred. Close-ups darken the faces to such an extent that the players (especially Miriam Hopkins) look like mulattoes. The intense light (twice as much as for the black-and-white film) playing on the heavy make-up (necessary for players in colour films) probably accounts for this. The screen has not by a far cry reached natural colour. *Becky Sharp* is still a *coloured* film, smacking of tinting. But for those moments when the primary colours smite the eye in bold splashes, the film is very much worth while seeing. As a film, it is better than *The Iron Duke* (which covers the same period), and if this is damning it with faint praise, let us hasten to add that Miriam Hopkins is always more enticing to the eye than George

Arliss—and she works ten times as hard as he does to help put a picture over.

I'm afraid, after all the expense and research made in colour for *Becky Sharp*, I still prefer Lee Garmes' lovely black-and-white photography in *The Scoundrel*. This is the latest Hecht-MacArthur picture which has set the critical boys on their ears in awe of so devastatingly sleek a picture. Here again the film's chief virtue is the novelty of Noel Coward's screen debut. The picture was written for him, and he lets Hecht and MacArthur's jewelled quips drop all about him in splendid and tantalizing confusion. Hence it has been called a "sparkling picture." It pretends to be a highly unmoral film until the end, when it goes moral (in a mystical epilogue) with all the passion of a negro revivalist meeting. In a film completely devoid of irony, it is indeed ironic to contemplate that the only warmth in the picture is in the touching performance of Julie Haydon, as the "good girl." The best line in the picture, when the young poetess (Julie Haydon) confesses her love of Keats and Proust and Shakespeare, is answered by the cynical publisher (Coward): "They lied every one of them. They lied first for fame or notoriety, then kept it up for royalties"—this, I think, is the best criticism of the picture. *The Scoundrel* substitutes the sophisticated quip for the banal wise-crack, balances unmorality with conventional morality. I am harsh with it only because it aims so high; even so, it rises disdainfully above the everyday run of movies and, at least, has been done with intelligence and impeccable taste. But with all its surface brilliance, it is a distinct let down for the creators of the ironic and superb *Crime Without Passion*.

Once in a Blue Moon, produced by Hecht and MacArthur between *Crime Without Passion* and *The Scoundrel*, is notable chiefly for the presence of Jimmy Savo, the inimitable Italian clown. The story is bad and direction surprisingly tepid. One hilarious sequence, concerning Savo's struggling conscience when confronted by a counterfeiting machine, is worthy of Chaplin at his best; but this, I think, is due more to Savo than Hecht and MacArthur. Some of the dialogue is charming, and often it is the tenderest thing imaginable. So completely devoid of guile and worldliness is it, that it folds its innocent props from underneath it and goes right to sleep in front of you. It will be remade in an attempt to salvage the fine performance of Jimmy Savo.

We have had colour, sophistication, charm; now, with tragedy and sex, the summer cycle is complete. The two outstanding examples have been *The Informer* for tragedy and *The Devil is a Woman* for sex. The former is by far the better film. Directed by John Ford from Liam O'Flaherty's story of that name, dealing with the Black and Tan period of Ireland's abortive rebellion, it starts slowly and

ominously in a pea-soup fog on a night in Dublin, when Gypo Nolan informed on his best friend to collect a twenty pound reward, so he could take his girl to America. Then follows a nightmarish sequence of Gypo's carousing about the town with his blood money (reminiscent in quality, in a minor way, to Joyce's famous night-town sequence in "Ulysses"), which ends up in Gypo's apprehension by his comrades and his extinction by a bullet as he attempts to escape from the monkey-court that tries him for his infamous betrayal. Victor MacLaglan performs mightily as Gypo Nolan. It is regrettable that Gypo's girl-friend was whitewashed in the film, because even a prostitute has no use for an informer in the story's milieu. Likewise the time of the incident was materially changed from the civil war period to that of the international guerrilla warfare.

The Devil is a Woman is either very subtle or just a very bad film. I haven't been able to make up my mind which. The last of the memorable Dietrich—von Sternberg cycle (which will go down in history as the twentieth-century Svengali-Trilby combination), it is visually the most beautiful and occasionally the dullest. Adapted from Pierre Louys' ironic comedy of Seville during carnival time, "Woman and Puppet," with a theme that is as ageless as it is pointed, notably that the "male of the species invariably comes back for more" (punishment) in the comedy of love, its thesis is the direct antithesis of *The Scoundrel*, for instance. Dietrich is incredibly lovely in the film, and von Sternberg has imparted to her a devastating sexual allure. Lionel Atwill and Cæsar Romero are puppets in a film which is all Dietrich. But you will remember the photography of Sternberg (he did the camera work himself), and Dietrich.

And, as proof that you can't keep a good man down, von Sternberg, having been given the sack by Paramount for *The Devil is a Woman*, is about to embark on a production (for another company) of no less an undertaking than Dostoievski's tortuous novel, "Crime and Punishment," with Peter Lorre as Raskolnikow.

As for the rest, perhaps the censorial activities contain most interest. Lang's *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* has been banned for its alleged anarchistic tendencies, and *La Maternelle* has had some two thousand feet cut—a stupid and impudent action, which is now being appealed. Paul Fejo's beautiful film, *Marie*, was also banned because "it makes a mockery of religion, the administration of justice and the action of respectable society, generally."

NATIONAL PRODUCTION IN BELGIUM

THE BELGIAN cinema has just had its first success with the film *De Witte*, produced by Jean Vanderheyden and Willem Benoy, and acted by a troupe of Flemish actors. Amongst the latter little Jefke Bruynincks has turned out a revelation and earned the nickname of the "Flemish Jackie Coogan." He plays the part of a mischievous and turbulent youngster imagined by the novelist Ernest Claes.

The interiors were shot in German studios, but there are also very beautiful landscapes taken in the Campine district of Belgium. Much of the plot, which is very simple, takes place in the open air.

It must be admitted that the direction is not quite perfect, but a popular success has been achieved and the public interested in a healthy and simple country story. The dialogue has a local colour which is greatly appreciated in Holland and Belgium.

The same producers have turned out *Alleen voor u* (*For You Alone*), the quality of which is not so good, being inspired by the international formula of the operetta, whereas the future of the Belgian production at the present time resides in a well-defined nationalism, such as allowed the Scandinavian cinema to assert itself after the war. At any rate this is the opinion of most of the critics.

Consequently a new attempt has just been made in this direction, also by Jules Vanderheyden. With the aid of the writer Ernest Claes, he has produced a kind of sequel to the famous novel of Charles De Coster, "The Legend of Thyl Uylenspiegel." This film is entitled *Thyl Uylenspiegel leeft nog* (*Thyl Uylenspiegel lives still*), and shows how the spirit of the famous hero continues and inspires imitators on Flemish soil.

Many of the pictures were shot at Damme, near Bruges, on the same site described in the book as being the birthplace of Uylenspiegel. This city has kept its middle age character. There is a beautiful church, town hall, and some houses which are artistic gems. It is to be hoped that the director of *Thyl Uylenspiegel leeft nog* has taken advantage of this picturesque element as well as of the local folk-lore. The post-synchronisation operations and interiors were done in Amsterdam.

As regards the French-speaking population, no efforts have yet been made, but it is hoped that Jacques Feyder, who is of Belgian origin, will come and turn several scenes of *La Kermesse Heroique* in Flanders, and that it will prove the starting-point for the further development of a national production of French expression in Belgium.

LUDO PATRIS.

FILM ARCHIVES

In view of the efforts now being made by the British Film Institute to establish a library of films of historical, cultural or educational value, it is interesting to learn what is being done in a similar direction by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. It has received a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation for the purpose of establishing a Department of Motion Pictures to be known as the Museum of Modern Art Film Library Corporation, with the following officers: John Hay Whitney, President; John E. Abbott, Vice-President and General Manager; and Edward M. M. Warburg, Treasurer. Iris Barry, formerly Librarian of the Museum, will be Curator of the Film Library. Because of lack of space in the building now occupied by the Museum, the Film Library will be located at 485 Madison Avenue.

The Film Library will undertake a number of activities, chief of which will be to assemble, catalogue and preserve as complete a record as possible, in the actual films, of all types of motion pictures made in America or elsewhere from 1889 to the present day; to exhibit and circulate these films, singly or in programme groups, to museums and colleges in the same manner in which other departments of the Museum now assemble, catalogue, exhibit and circulate paintings, sculpture, models and photographs of architecture, and reproductions of works of art. In addition, the Film Library will assemble a collection of books and periodicals on the film and gather other historical and critical material, including the vast amount of unrecorded data in the minds of the men who were either active participants or close observers of the development of the motion picture from its beginning. The Film Library also hopes to assemble a collection of film stills and a collection of old music scores originally issued to accompany the silent films. All the activities of the Film Library will be strictly non-commercial. There will be no charge for many of its services and the fee for its circulating exhibitions of films will be less than the cost of assembling and distributing the programmes to the colleges and museums. It will in no way compete with the film industry.

In announcing the newly organized Film Library, A. Conger Goodyear, President of the Museum, said: "The expansion of the Museum to include a department of motion pictures has long been contemplated. As our Charter states, the Museum is 'established and maintained for the purpose of encouraging and developing a

study of modern art.' The art of the motion picture is the only art peculiar to the twentieth century. As an art it is practically unknown and unstudied. Many who are well acquainted with modern painting, literature, drama and architecture, are almost wholly ignorant of the work of such great directors as Pabst, Pudovkin, or Seastrom, and of the creative stages in the development of men like Griffith and Chaplin, yet the films which these and other men made have had an immeasurably great influence on the life and thought of the present generation.

"This new and living form of expression, a vital force in our time, is such a young art that it can be studied from its beginnings; the 'primitives' among the movies are only forty years old. Yet the bulk of all films that are important historically or æsthetically, whether foreign or domestic, old or new, are invisible under existing conditions. To preserve these films and make them available to the public for study and research is the aim of the new Film Library."

John Hay Whitney, who is a Trustee of the Museum as well as President of the Film Library, has been very active in the preliminary survey made by the Museum during the past year to ascertain the possible response from the museums and colleges throughout America to the activities contemplated for the Film Library. This work was undertaken by John E. Abbott, who found that hundreds of colleges and museums were eager to avail themselves of the services proposed.

In commenting on the co-ordination of the work of the Film Library with colleges and museums, Whitney said: "It is estimated that seventy million people attend the movies every week in the United States. The very great influence of the motion picture in forming the taste and affecting the lives of the greater part of our population is well known. Despite the efforts the industry itself has made in this field, much remains to be done in arousing a critical, selective attitude toward the films in that part of the public most responsive to the arts—students, visitors to museums and art galleries, and the active group in each community which takes the leadership in cultural matters. The situation is as though no novels were available to the public except the current year's output or as though no paintings could ever be seen except those painted during the previous twelve months. As a consequence, whenever artistic standards and creative vitality have been achieved in individual movies they are soon lost to view. From time to time attempts have been made to remedy the lack of means for the study and preservation of the film. Efforts have been made in many communities both here and abroad to show new films of artistic merit which are not exhibited commercially, and to revive old films of interest. In most cases success has been only partial and the activity of short duration, as it has been almost impossible for any single

group to obtain the necessary films. To remedy this situation the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art has been established."

Among the first films to be acquired by the Museum is *The Great Train Robbery*, one of the earliest of the entertainment films, made in 1903 by an Edison camera-man, Edwin S. Porter. (Incidentally, another copy of this same film, discovered by C. A. Oakley of the Film Society of Glasgow, is also one of the first films to be included in the Film Institute library.) Another interesting acquisition is interesting as a record of the scientific curiosity and experiment that preceded the actual development of pictures that move. In 1872 Governor Stanford of California wanted to settle a bet as to whether or not a horse took all four feet off the ground at once when racing. He hired an ingenious photographer, Edward Muybridge, who had an engineer set up forty cameras along a race track. Wires operated the camera shutters, and as the horse passed each camera a separate picture was taken. These were not motion pictures, of course, in the true sense; they were simply a series of still pictures that analysed motion. Years later, in Paris, transparencies were made of these photographs and projected on a toy screen to refute criticism regarding the postures of horses painted by the French artist Meissonier.

Muybridge continued his photographic studies at the University of Pennsylvania, where the majority of his models were students or instructors; most of the women he photographed were artists' models. He used approximately the same method he had employed in photographing the racing horse for Governor Stanford, except that in his later work he operated only twenty-four cameras. The Museum of Modern Art Film Library has acquired a large portfolio of ninety of his photographic studies entitled "Animal Locomotion," which was published in 1887. Each study is composed of twenty-four individual photographs which record a segment each of continuous movement.

Also to be included in the Library is the famous "kiss" movie made by May Irwin and John C. Rice in 1896, when they were appearing on the Broadway stage in a play called "The Widow Jones." The play was famed for an osculatory scene of great length. An independent producer conceived the brilliant idea of turning that single scene into a motion picture. His studio was the roof of an office building on 28th Street, New York, where he had made a number of pictures. Edison sent a camera-man to take the picture, which consisted solely of the kiss and its two participants. Over the protests of whatever league was operating in the nineties to keep the world pure and proper, the picture was shown all over the country. The Museum of Modern Art Film Library copy of the "kiss" reel was found in a trash can in the Bronx.

From
Paul Rotha's
new film
"Face of Britain"
(Gaumont-British
Instructional).

Above—Harry Bauer in "Moscow Nights," directed by Anthony Asquith. Below—A scene from René Clair's first English film "The Ghost Goes West." Both London Film productions.

COLOUR AND EMOTION

ROUBEN MAMOULIAN

Love of colour and susceptibility to colour is one of the strongest instincts in human beings. If you want to discover the most organic, basic elements of the sophisticated human being of to-day, go to children and go to savages. You will find that next to food, they love things of vivid colour and sparkle. That instinct is alive and strong in every one of us.

Once colour comes to the screen, we will be unhappy without it. It brings a new terrific power to motion pictures. So far, visually, we have been dealing with light and shade and compositions on the screen. Now the additional element of colour will serve not merely to superficially adorn the images in motion, but to increase the dramatic and emotional effectiveness of the story which is being unfolded to the spectator.

Apart from pure pictorial beauty and the entertainment value of colour, there is also a definite emotional content and meaning in most colours and shades. The artist should take advantage of the mental and emotional implications of colour and use them on the screen to increase the power and effectiveness of a scene, situation or character.

I have tried to do as much of this in *Becky Sharp* as the story allowed. As one example, I would refer to the sequence of the panic which occurs at the Duchess of Richmond's ball when the first shots of Napoleon's cannons are heard. You will see (at least I hope that you will) how inconspicuously, but with telling effect, this sequence builds to a climax through a series of intercut shots which progress from the coolness and sobriety of colours like grey, blue, green and pale yellow, to the exciting danger and threat of deep orange and flaming red. The effect is achieved by the selection of dresses and uniforms worn by the characters and the colour of backgrounds and lights.

There is a little of home-coming feeling in this for me as the use of colour and coloured lights was one of my main joys and excitement in the theatre. Surely, the effectiveness of productions like "Porgy," "Marco's Millions" and "Congai" which I have done in the theatre would have been sadly decreased if I were forced not to use colour in sets, costumes and lights on the stage.

Of course, in each art, different subjects are expressed best through different forms. Undoubtedly, there are some stories which beg for colour on the screen more than others. Off-hand, a story of a historical period of the past, when life and clothing were much more colourful, or stories with the backgrounds of countries like Spain and Italy, even of to-day, would ask for colour more than some stories of our modern age and civilization. The black and white films will still have their place on the screen, but most assuredly, as time goes by, there will be less of them and more of colour pictures.

Everything that is beautiful to the eye is a great gift to humanity. Colour on the screen is such a gift. The only danger of it that I can see during the first stages of the colour picture, would be the danger of excess. Talking pictures did not avoid it during the first months of their existence. There was too much talk and too much noise on the screen. The cinema must not fall into a trap and must not go about colour as a newly-rich. Colour should not mean gaudiness. Restraint and selectiveness is the essence of art.

FILM LECTURING IN CANADA

The Canadian National Council of Education had an Italian and British week in 1933-34, but since the "British" week turned out to be English, and the Canadian Scots disapproved of this one-sided idea of Britain, they asked us this season to bring along a Scottish lecture and our films of crofter life, including *The Rugged Island*, and several shorts.

We started out in the Maritimes, visiting four university centres, Sackville, Halifax, Wolfville and Fredericton, and then were in every city by turn from Montreal west to Vancouver. We had taken our own projector to ensure a good picture every time, but it arrived smashed, so we had to depend on what was provided.

Time and again I was warned how sophisticated Canadian children are from five years old and up. I began to suspect I was being warned that I might expect noisy and unruly behaviour from schools. But I never found that. I had audiences ranging in size from 50 to 1250, and ages from seven to eighteen. Sophisticated they may seem in some ways, but not over animals and birds and the simple natural life of country people. I found all the school audiences enthusiastic.

Quite a number of schools and universities we visited were equipped with some kind of apparatus, from 16 mm to hand-

turned 35 mm. projectors. Teachers are becoming more and more keen on films in schools—but have difficulty in finding them, of course.

Our lecture tour ended in Vancouver in January. And after being held there ten days by a snowstorm such as had not been experienced for years, we managed to come East again on the first train that could get through.

On the prairies of Saskatchewan we joined Evelyn Spice, and there, in the few weeks we had left, we linked up and made a two-reeler, *Prairie Winter*.

It was often 20 degrees below zero, and we had to wear all we possessed, for we rode around the country in an open sleigh to get our subjects. But it was the camera that needed the most tender treatment, for without its hot-water bottle and several rugs, it would freeze up, run slow, and produce most ludicrous effects.

The film is simple. The prairie farmer loads up his sleigh with wheat and takes it to the elevator. On the way he passes the life of the countryside. His neighbours chop down bush for firewood, girls have to go off into a drift to let his load pass safely on the beaten down track, the school children are harnessing up ponies to their toboggans, or climbing on to their ponies to gallop home. The sleigh reaches the elevator in the small town, the load is emptied, and the farmer starts for home. A blizzard comes up quickly, and by the time the farmer reaches home he is hardly able to see fifty yards ahead of him.

Most of the sound was added, the talking and commentary by real honest-to-God Canadians, in the studio in London.

JENNY BROWN.

NEW BOOKS

HOLLYWOOD BY STARLIGHT. By R. J. Minney. (London: Chapman and Hall, 7s. 6d.) We may all be familiar with most of the facts in this amusing, sometimes ruthless, but mostly good-natured "revelation" of life within and without the studios, but Minney's analysis of the Hollywood mind is something rare and pungent. In retelling the apparently superficial encounters and incidents experienced during his sojourn in California for the filming of his play, *Clive in India*, he shows in many a succinct phrase that he has seen beneath the surface. His admiration for Chaplin—"the only real genius in the film world"—is unconcealed, and so, too, is his regard, on a different plane, for Darryl Zanuck, comet among producers. Some Goldwynisms which Minney recalls are

worth repeating. "The fella's a liar. All he says you gotta take with a dose of salts——" "You can include me out of it." "It was a complete carriage of misjustice." Amusing as they may be they are not untypical of the mentality that controls the American film industry.

HOW TO ENTER THE FILM WORLD. By E. G. Cousins. (London: Allen and Unwin, 2s.) A cautionary guide to the snags, disappointments, compensations and prizes attached to "being in films" in any capacity from boilerman or clerk to director or star. For the purpose of this guide "the film world" does not include documentary or non-theatrical cinema—but perhaps the author feels he has been sufficiently discouraging without adding to his strictures. Anyone with sufficient hardihood to enter films after E. G. Cousins' warnings deserves all the plums he can secure. A most helpful handbook.

PLAYTIME IN RUSSIA. Edited by Hubert Griffeth. (London: Methuen, 6s.) Nine contributors, mostly well-known journalists, none of whom is a Communist, survey the means and scope of entertainment and recreation in Russia to-day. The general tone is one of admiration, sometimes reluctant, mostly spontaneously enthusiastic. Huntly Carter deals with the cinema. In somewhat abstract terms, which may be slightly bewildering to the general reader, he concludes that the cinema in Russia is "a basic human need," "an inner necessity," "an organic part of human society." He describes at some length *Three Songs about Lenin*, which H. G. Wells saw at the same time and was going home to dream about, and *The Miracle*, which provided "evidence of recent æsthetic and technical advance."

PHOTOGRAPHY YEAR BOOK, 1935. Edited by T. Korda. (London: Cosmopolitan Press, 21s.) Though entirely devoted to still photography this collection of 464 pages containing over 1,700 photographs from 522 international contributors, arranged in sections including pictorial, trick, scientific and applied photography, has a considerable interest for film students. If it is sometimes difficult to decide what principle has governed the choice of prints and regrettable that some of the plates have been trimmed for no apparent reason, the diversity of technique as displayed by leading craftsmen of all countries, in lighting, composition and expressiveness, contains a wealth of suggestion for the movie camera-man. Among the full-page reproductions those of Man Ray, Jean Moral, Hoyniugen-Hueue and Shaw Wildman, as usual, are outstanding for their imagination and originality.

From "Pescados," a Mexican dramatic documentary film of the revolt of the Vera Cruz fishermen against enslaving economic conditions.

From the London Film production "Things to Come" adapted from H. G. Wells. Direction: Cameron Menzies.

THE COLOUR QUESTION

FORSYTH HARDY

IT HAS been a comparatively quiet quarter, despite the excitement over *Becky Sharp*, the puzzle of the Hecht-McArthur film, *The Scoundrel*, the reappearance of the American gangster film in a new form with *G.-Men*, and the intermittent news of progress on the Chaplin film. There is, of course, the fine, firm achievement of *B.B.C.—the Voice of Britain*, and the G.P.O. Unit's film is enough to make any quarter memorable; but, this apart, the immediate future promises to be more attractive than the immediate past has been (a situation not unfamiliar in a cinema which ever murmurs *manana* over unfulfilled promises). The Wells film, *The Masses* (or whatever title Chaplin finally decides upon), Max Reinhardt's version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the new *Cabinet of Dr Caligari* by Karl Dreyer and Robert Weine, perhaps London Films' *Conquest of the Air*, and Rene Clair's *The Ghost Goes West*—if these meet reasonable expectations, the film year ought to go out with a flourish.

Colour has been the predominating topic of the quarter. There was very little constructive thinking about sound in the cinema before the production of the first talkie. Equally the appearance of the first major colour film has been preceded by very little serious consideration of the effect, application, and possibilities of colour. It is as well to recognize that we are to have colour not because the movie audience has felt the lack of it and asked for it; not because the craftsmen have mastered the use of sound and are anxious to experiment further; and not because colour has been proved essential to the developing art of the cinema; but because the producers have decided that the entertainment film requires a fresh infusion of novelty. Sound. Now colour. Later some adaptation or exploitation of television. Always the developments have their basis in commercialism. The producers who make them think in terms of box-office appeal, not of æsthetic concepts.

Arguments about the superfluity of sound in the cinema did not silence the talkie. Æsthetic opposition to the coming of colour will not keep films in black-and-white if *Becky Sharp* and its immediate successors succeed at the box-office. Intelligent opposition to colour has been on the expected lines. It is suggested that colour

is an additional temptation for the film merely to copy reality and that the less opportunity there is for divergence from nature, the less justified the film will be in claiming to be an art. To reproduce the apprehension of one critic: "If the cinema is diverted by colour into the mere photography of the pageantry of life or of the costume play, and neglects that significant use of the camera which is its chief title to artistic standing, the new marvel will be as much of a curse as a blessing." But the colour film is not to be condemned after so cursory a trial. There are sufficient occasions in *Becky Sharp* when colour is used dramatically, making a peculiar and otherwise unobtainable contribution to the production, to demonstrate that colour need not be used merely to make film reproduction more accurate and complete.

Becky Sharp was chosen as the first major colour subject, plainly not because of the producer's interest in Thackeray, but because it was admirably suited to show off the new Technicolor palette's range and brilliance. The gay dress of both the men and women of the period, the deep rich tones of the military uniforms, the delicate shades of tapestry and furnishings, and the general love of brightness characteristic of a pre-industrial age—these combined to make a version, however distant, of "Vanity Fair" an attractive proposition for the producer anxious to startle the filmgoer into enthusiasm for colour. Robert Edmund Jones and Rouben Mamoulian, two men with stage and therefore colour experience, have not overlooked their opportunities, and for most of the film they are engaged in decorating the screen in colour that is an almost constant pleasure and a recurring delight. The Duchess of Richmond's ball, however, allows them to do something more. There is a lyrical shot of dancers which improves even on Lubitsch's memorable sequence in *The Merry Widow*. Later, in a scene which is pure fantasy from the historical point of view, the dancers are driven into a panic by the sound of distant guns, and we see as the screen transforms into cold greys and dark blues, that colour can be used most effectively to create atmosphere. The shot of officers, speeding out on their way to battle, their great scarlet cloaks flapping in the wind, has already become something of a classic example of the dramatic use of colour.

It is difficult to give a confident answer to the colour question. Now that colour cinematography of this quality and consistency is scientifically practical, however, its wider adoption is only a question of time. If none of the colour films were worse than *Becky Sharp* we would not need to have any qualms about the new revolution; but less efficient processes and less expert artists will inevitably produce less excellent results. It is a little frightening to imagine what may happen when second-rate art directors are let loose with colour.

Their indiscretions will be literally glaring. In the meantime there is room for much more imaginative experimentation with colour than there is in *Becky Sharp*.

Of all the quarter's films *The Scoundrel* is the most tantalizing. It has the impudent independence, the freedom from the conventionalities and clichés of Hollywood expression which we expect from the Hecht-McArthur-Garmes team; yet it is not content to be merely more sophisticated than the everyday rubber-stamp movie: we are left with the impression that the authors are deliberately, if subtly and cynically, laughing at the vast movie audience. There is no reason why the filmgoer should not go into the pillory when the film-maker has himself gone there (cf. *Once in a Lifetime*). But Hecht and McArthur do not do a straightforward job in satire. If there is a sneer, there is something sly and behindhand about it.

Their film is constructed in two parts. The first is occupied with a young New York publisher, amorous, hard-hearted, cynical, who, with the unconventional and sophisticated writers and artists who are gathered about him, the film invites us to admire. Into the midst of this setting, like a rabbit among foxes, comes a fresh young poetess whose mind is free from the acid of cynicism. The publisher is attracted for a time, but becomes bored and there is tearful separation, during which the poetess curses him, praying that the 'plane in which he is pursuing a lady to Bermuda will crash and that he will die, knowing not a single soul will regret his death. As it is ordered so it is; and at this point comes the sudden change of emphasis in a film in which cynicism and ultra-sophistication have been placed on a pedestal.

A Voice speaks, and orders that he shall spend a month on earth, searching for one person who will weep for him and bring rest to his troubled soul. He moves among his former acquaintances and, in contrast to earlier sneers at simple, moral folk "who are afraid to enjoy life," he now rails at his friends for the smug contentment of their little souls. Eventually, on the last day of his month of grace, he wins salvation through the tears of the young poetess he deserted. What are we to make of this piece of primitive allegory? Are the authors, as Lejeune has suggested, left laughing themselves hoarse at the ethically impregnable solution to their tale? If so, why is the second section played with such intense sincerity? In the first part Noel Coward utters his cynicisms with an easy elegance; but in the second his acting is compelling and the final shot in which, looking reverently upward, he gives thanks for his deliverance, has immense emotional force. Yet earlier, the film, with cynicism as mortar, has been steadily building up in our minds a barrier which stands firm against this metaphysical onslaught.

The Scoundrel has too much wit and ingenuity, however, for it

to be any less than welcomed, despite dubiety over the motive of the producers. Coward, fitting perfectly into the Hecht-McArthur scheme of things, has an important influence on the film (though he claims only one line of dialogue: "H'm! H'm! H'm! That sounds like an epigram"); and Julie Haydon, of *Dawn to Dawn*, is vivid and appealing. The photography is skilful and sensitive, and the dialogue a continued stimulus.

While watching from a distance, and critically, the activities of its rebels, Hollywood has been returning to familiar material with a new cycle of crime pictures. Someone has been suggesting that if all its films could be gangster films, Hollywood's troubles would be over; and certainly most of them are made with a superb bravura. Hollywood appears to understand the gangster, and there is nothing hazy or hesitating about the films devoted to him. In the new cycle the aim is the same as before: to secure for the films excitement, suspense, and violence from the conflict between the forces of law and lawlessness. Gangsters are now less popular than they were, and the new films are designed to glorify the Federal detectives who, under a new Roosevelt law, are allowed to carry guns and use against the gangster his own weapons.

G.-Men (Warner Brothers), the first of the cycle, is a swift and exciting film, describing a pitched battle between two organizations, the one working for the preservation and the other for the destruction of society. Violence is the main ingredient of the film, but there are also a skilfully managed and maintained suspense and a feeling of respect for men devoting their lives to hazardous but necessary work. There have also been *Public Hero No. 1* (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer), a further illustration of a whole nation's warfare against gangsters; *False Faces* (United Artists), a demonstration of the ingenuity of the Federal agents as detectives; and *Car 99* (Paramount), an inside picture of the efficiency of the radio police-car service. Speed, force, vigour, and clarity are qualities common to most of the new crime films which may do something to transfer to the policemen some of the glamour formerly reserved for the gangsters.

As an incidental to the main movie stream, there may be noted briefly in conclusion the steady improvement in the range and make-up of the news-reels which, if they still place unnecessary emphasis on sport and militarism, make more arresting and attractive use of the ten minutes at their disposal than most of the feature films they accompany.

If you remember the early Russian films of the *General Line-Turksib* vintage with pleasure and admiration, forget about them when you go to see a modern Russian sound film. This question of right approach to a film is most important. *Le Dernier Milliardaire*, for example, was damned by the critics, because they expected another *Le Million* or an *A Nous la Liberté*, and didn't get it. Had they judged the film on its own merits, they would have given its quality proper recognition. In the same way, on going to see *Nights of St. Petersburg*, all memories of Eisenstein, Turin, Pudovkin and their contemporaries should be dismissed. The Russian directors of to-day have discarded the technique, the tricks, the philosophy even, of their celebrated predecessors. The modern directors are, of course, working in a new medium, and the impact of sound evidently paralysed them for some time. *The Road to Life*, despite photography and sound of the poorest quality, created a tremendous impression because of its virility. After *The Road to Life* there was a long silence, and now we have *Nights of St. Petersburg*, or, in its abbreviated title, *St. Petersburg*.

The film is based on two stories by Dostoievsky, "White Nights" and "Netotchka," and the setting is the Russia of 1860. Igor Efimov, an impoverished musician, is a brilliant violinist and composer. But because his music is "revolutionary" both his playing and his composing are rejected by the conventional public, who award their favours to less gifted musicians whose orthodoxy is more acceptable. Unwilling (unlike most "geniuses") to do a little hack work to feed his family, he becomes poorer and poorer and glummer and glummer until, at the end, he meets, in some unspecified slum quarter, a group of convicts who are singing one of his songs. Then, according to the programme, "he finds recognition with the masses, who understand the symbolism of his music and the message he has written for them."

Inevitably, this is an interesting film, and actually it is not as dull as a bare outline of the plot might lead you to believe. The continuity is good, the photography moderate, and there is no attempt at juggling with sound or cutting. It at least illustrates that technically the Russians have now found their feet in a world of sound and speech, and leads us to hope that having done so, their former virtuosity will return in the course of time. In case it should mean anything in future, it is to be noted that the film was directed by G. Rochal and C. Stroeva. Despite the cumbrous and not conspicuously logical story, the film is definitely worth seeing.

Barcarolle—a Romance in Venice is pleasant enough and has some

good moments in it, as befits a Ufa film. Edwige Feuillere, who will be remembered in *Ces Messieurs de la Santé*, plays the wife, and Pierre Richard-Willm, a remarkably handsome young man, takes the part of the gay adventurer who seduces the wife for a bet and falls in love in the process. There are no pyrotechnics, but it is a competent piece of work and few people would walk out on it.

Of the same genre, but infinitely more charming than *Reka*, is *Der Schimmelreiter*, recently seen at the Academy. The title means literally "The Rider on the White Horse," and indeed an element of magic enters the film as soon as the hero buys the white horse from a strange gypsy. There is an old legend that, when Der Schimmelreiter appears, death, flood and destruction follow.

The action takes place in a little village on the north coast of Holland, and tells of the hero's struggles to convince the villagers of the advantages, the necessity even, of the construction of a new dyke. The opposition is led by Ole Peters, who coveted both the position of Dyke Master and the girl who became the hero's wife. After plot and counter-plot, the splendid new dyke is erected. Hauke Haien, the hero, directs the work on horseback—that, in fact, of the great white horse he bought when the work began. When the work is finished there is much revelling. Suddenly the celebrations are interrupted. It is raining heavily and floods threaten. The old dyke collapses, and Hauke can only save the village from destruction by cutting a hole in the new dyke and directing the flood in such a manner that it must inevitably overwhelm his own home. This he does, and he and his wife are swept away to destruction. The white horse which Hauke had bought then trots away and vanishes into thin air on the skyline. Thus the legend came true —death, flood and destruction followed Der Schimmelreiter.

Despite the tragedy which overwhelms the hero and his wife at the end, this is a very delightful and refreshingly simple story. Many delightful shots of the countryside and of the peasants dancing in their gay costumes are introduced. Matthias Wieman, who will be remembered with pleasure as the traveller in *The Blue Light*, takes the leading part with equal charm and success in this film. Photography and sound are both good and the film deserves to be seen for its beauty and simplicity.

Looking back on the season's Continental films, it must be admitted that, with the exception of *Refugees*, *Remous*, *Hey-Rup*, *Maskerade*, *Le Dernier Milliardaire* and *Der Schimmelreiter*, they have been on the whole an uninspired batch. Few of them have been positively bad, nearly all of them have at least been good entertainment. Yet it cannot be said that any one of them has embodied any significant contribution to cinema. Why is this? The exodus from the German studios does not wholly explain it. Russia's

silence has not caused the studios of the world to stagnate. Is it not that Hollywood and Elstree are now technically on a par with France, Germany and Russia? I think this factor is the one which makes the Continental film seem less remarkable than it did three years ago. Technically the scores are level. The battle is won on content. And it now appears that novelettes are written in France and Germany, just as they are in America and England.

J. S. FAIRFAX-JONES.

B.B.C.—THE VOICE OF BRITAIN

Production: G.P.O. Film Unit. Direction: John Grierson, Stuart Legg.

IT WOULD have been easy for a film of the B.B.C. to be a joyless jumble of dull mechanical explanation, self-conscious programme picturization, and solemn sermon on policy. The G.P.O. film is admittedly diverse; but not only is there a plan behind the diversity but an individual approach which is established and maintained. The film dramatizes its material but humanizes it as well, so that its different compartments have vitality and the whole has unity.

Its content may be described as a chronicle of a day's broadcasting in Britain, although it is hardly as naïve as that might suggest. Certainly it starts with an early morning service conducted by the Rev. Dick Sheppard, but its independent character is immediately established as the camera is released to build up with a few quick strokes the placid picture of a listening countryside. The film is always more of an illumination than a summary, and as it reviews the activities at Broadcasting House—routine, preparation, rehearsal, performance—we are not aware of the time-table as the only link but feel drawn into the drama. There is, for example, the S.O.S. message for the mate of a Scottish drifter informing him that his mother is lying dangerously ill at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, which we hear broadcast in the impersonal detached voice of the announcer, and then watch being picked up by the vessel at sea, the message meanwhile rippling on in gently echoed fragments. Again, there is the episode of the two-minute delay in the regional link-up, caused by a Highland village concert running late—an episode which a lively camera and a sensitive microphone, quickly establishing the character of the regional centres, make dramatic and moving. It is this seeing eye of the film which is its outstanding virtue. It operates everywhere, inside Broadcasting House as well as outside, ranging the panorama of a listening Britain. Only in the children's hour sequence is it oddly clouded with artificiality. Towards the end of the film come the faces of the representative great men—the politicians, kept silent; Wells, Chesterton, Shaw, Low, and Priestley heard in characteristic phrase.

The complete forum of the G.P.O. directors worked on the film and, while the influence of John Grierson is always apparent in its penetrating approach and perceptive treatment, it is possible occasionally to detect individual styles. Camera and microphone are used with masterly freedom and the regional station sequence, attributed to Evelyn Spice, is a notable example of the unself-conscious union of sight and sound. A special credit goes to Stuart Legg, who organized, unified, and did much to weld together the mass of semi-related fragments.

The Voice of Britain, the most ambitious of the G.P.O. Unit's films, is a solid and successful achievement, the product of insight, initiative, and enthusiasm. F. H.

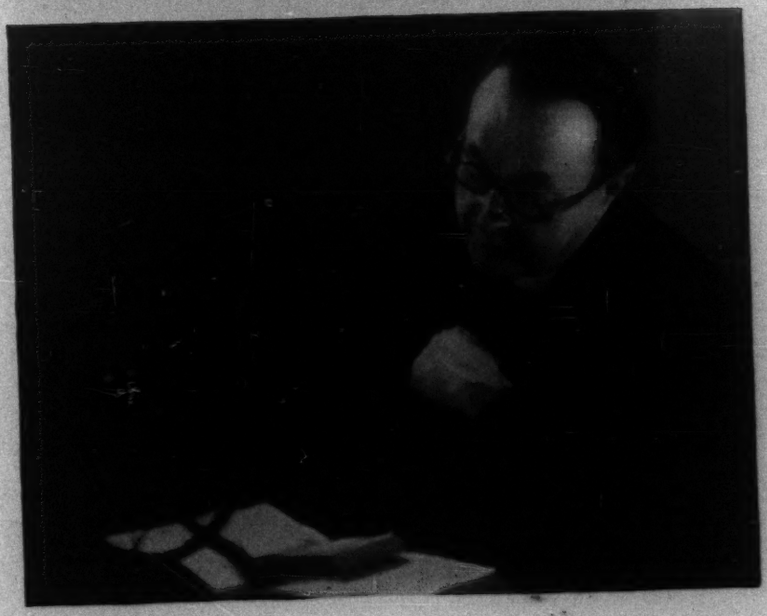
BLACK FURY

Production: Warner. Direction: Michael Curtiz with Paul Muni and Karen Morley. Length: 7591 feet.

WHY Warner Brothers, profitably engaged in the manufacture of melodramas and leg-shows, should turn and grapple on a plane of high seriousness with a social evil, as they did once before in *I Am a Fugitive*, is one of the minor mysteries of American film-making. Whatever prompted it, we must be grateful for this gallant flight from unreality to Coaltown and salute an honesty that makes no attempt to disguise the dreariness of the miners' row.

The setting is Pennsylvania, but the atmosphere of industrial squalor created by the faithful documenting of pit shafts, strikers' processions, groups of haggard women and children on doorsteps, cheap pubs. and protest meetings in smoky halls differs little from that of British and Continental black countries. One element localizes it—the diversity of the miners' racial origin. Joe Radek, a part which Paul Muni with his peasant's physiognomy is ideally fitted to interpret, stands for that pathetic mass of semi-illiterates, a generation or so removed from the soil of Continental fields, who support the complex fabric of American civilization by their labour in Uncle Sam's mines and factories. It is a type worth representing on the screen, and Muni's portrait has a stark verisimilitude beside which most of the others appear artificial and shadowy. The strike-bearing racketeers and mine-owners are, for example, mere puppets conveniently introduced to assist the development of the plot.

Most mining films (among them such a notable contribution to peace propaganda as *Kameradschaft*) take the line of least resistance and make their highlight a pit disaster. *Black Fury* digs its drama from material which at first sight looks as intractable as



From "B.B.C.—The Voice of Britain," a John Grierson Production.

Courtesy G.P.O. Films and H.M. Stationery Office.

From "Wonders of Flying," a
Terra film featuring Ernest Udet,
remarkable for its thrills and photography

the rock from which its miners quarry their coal—the long-drawn misery of a lockout. True, there is a concession to melodrama in the last reel, when the hero brings men and masters to terms by barricading himself in the mine with enough dynamite to blow it sky high; but the film does make a devious attempt to express what is above all characteristic of a mine strike—the flat monotony of days passed in futile negotiation.

Upon the larger drama of the lockout is superimposed the personal tragedy of Radek's desertion by the girl he had expected to marry. Except in so far as it reveals his character it hardly matters, and both her penitent return to him in the interests of a happy ending and his ready forgiveness of her lapse do violence to psychological probability. Though not, on the whole, up to the standard of *I Am a Fugitive*, this film has definite importance as an index of America's increasing absorption with her sociological problems.

CAMPBELL NAIRNE.

THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS (*British. G.-B.*). The main plot of John Buchan's novel remains, with many of the individual situations, the Scottish setting and the hero, Richard Hannay; but the story has been thoroughly modernized and a light romantic element introduced. Alfred Hitchcock, with Ian Hay and Wyndham Lewis, have done much to translate speech into action, and the film from the first foot *is* action. He tells the story clearly and convincingly and the wildly melodramatic moments are in part offset by such well observed sequences as the Scottish political meeting, the Forth Bridge episode, and the discreetly managed scene in the inn bedroom. Robert Donat plays Hannay with an attractive spirit and humour. A blot on the film for Scotsmen is the unconvincing charge of meanness directed at a Scottish crofter. F. H.

THE DEVIL IS A WOMAN (*American. Paramount*). Josef von Sternberg's new film demonstrates most clearly that the director has died and become a photographer. It is at once a most beautiful and an empty film. To Sternberg every shot is something to fondle and caress, a composition to linger over and tirelessly titivate. Even the shot of a letter must have a shadowy pattern across it. If only it were possible to close the mind the eye could gorge itself on this surface splendour; but the inanities of the cheap charade in the background continually interrupt. The film stars Marlene Dietrich, and, like that exotic lady, is a masterpiece of the toilette; but it is lacking in every virtue which made Sternberg a director of promise. F. H.

LES MISERABLES (*American. Twentieth Century*). Two aspects of this fifth or sixth version of Hugo's novel call for comment: W. P. Lipscomb's masterly compression of the theme and Laughton's performance as Javert. Lipscomb has selected most of the essentials and assembled them skilfully, so that while the film has little time to linger for fine effects, it gets over the narrative ground briskly and satisfactorily. And the scenario seems to have suited the directorial style of Richard Boleslavsky who brings the story to the screen in broad, sweeping strokes. The strength of Laughton's performance makes this film more than other versions a conflict between Javert and Jean Valjean. With studied power, he brings this inhuman bully, obsessed with the sacredness of the law, to life and the final moment of his struggle and submission is the most moving in the film. Frederic Marsh's Valjean is competent, but scarcely inspired, and Cedric Hardwicke's restrained performance as the Bishop Bienvenu is over too soon. F.H.

FILM SOCIETIES

DURING the summer months the film societies movement is in a state of suspended activity. Councils and officials, however, are busy preparing programmes for the coming season, and many new groups are planning campaigns to establish societies in untapped areas.

Among the districts which will have new societies commencing operations in the autumn are Torquay, Wolverhampton, Ayrshire, Ipswich, Dundee, St. Andrews, Plymouth, and Maidenhead.

The secretary of the MAIDENHEAD FILM SOCIETY is P. J. Chippingdale Watsham, 31 High Street, Maidenhead. Ten performances will be given on Sunday afternoons in the Rialto. The subscription will be 20s., and a membership of 600 is aimed at. It is also hoped to form a similar society in Reading.

The headquarters of the PLYMOUTH FILM SOCIETY will be at Virginia House, where standard sound apparatus has been installed. The objects are to give performances of outstanding films from all countries, to support the exhibition of worth-while entertainment and educational pictures, and to support special exhibitions for children. The chairman is John Case, and the secretary is Martin Atkinson.

Gordon C. Hales, 36 Constable Road, Ipswich, is secretary of the IPSWICH FILM SOCIETY, which in addition to giving private performances intends to organize lectures, to produce experimental and documentary films, and to establish a library of film books.

The secretary of the TORQUAY FILM SOCIETY is C. M. Rowe, Warbro Way, Brixham Road, Paignton, and of the DUNDEE FILM SOCIETY, G. E. Geddes, Scotswood, Wormit, Dundee.

The annual report of the TYNESIDE FILM SOCIETY (hon. sec., M. C. Pottinger, Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle-upon-Tyne) shows that a membership if 771 has been achieved. With a programme of seven Sunday evening performances, three displays of 16 mm. films, and two children's matinees, and a financial balance of over £10, the society may compliment itself on a very successful season.

The report of the LEICESTER FILM SOCIETY (hon. sec., E. Irving Richards, Vaughan College, Leicester) shows that this progressive society, founded in 1931, was in a strong enough financial position to give an extra seventh performance without additional charge to members.

A proposal to institute a special membership fee of one guinea in order to hold private performances similar to those of other film societies was not favoured by the members of the MERSEYSIDE FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY, and it has been decided to retain the former subscription of 2s. 6d., which includes receipt of a monthly bulletin and the right to purchase tickets for special performances from time to time. A series of lectures on individual directors and producing units is being prepared and a junior society for school-children is being formed. The hon. sec. is J. A. Parker, Bluecoat Chambers, Liverpool 1.

The EDINBURGH FILM GUILD has removed to new premises at 11 N. St. Andrew Street, Edinburgh 2. The following office-bearers have been appointed for the ensuing season: Hon. President, Professor Talbot Rice; Hon. Vice-Presidents, Edwin Muir and Ian Whyte; Chairman, Norman Wilson; Hon. sec., Sheila A. C. Smith; Hon-Films sec., J. C. H. Dunlop; Hon. treas., F. C. P. Maclauchlan.

News of the film societies will be fully reported in forthcoming issues of the new *World Film News and Cinema Quarterly*. Programmes, announcements and reports should be addressed to Cinema Contact Ltd., 24 N.W. Thistle Street Lane, Edinburgh 2.

INDEX TO VOLUME 3

Alexeieff, A., Claire Parker and New Abstract Process . . 34
Allberg, Ragnar. Film Abroad . 155
American Screen
Herman G. Weinberg . . 216
American Year. Kirk Bond . 92
Are We Civilised? . . . 182
Arnheim, Rudolf
Film Critic of To-day and To-morrow 203
I.C.E. 95
Artist and the Film
Arthur Shearsby . . . 143
Atalante 46

B.B.C. 237
Beisiegel, Leslie
Independent Film-maker 59, 125, 186
Betts, Ernest. Scenario . . 160
Black Fury 238
Blossom Time 54
Bond, Kirk. American Year . 92
Bower, Dallas. Wagner and Film 27
Brown, Jenny
Film Lecturing in Canada . 226
Bruce Woolfe, Rotha and *Rising Tide*. John Grierson . . 37

Camera Movement. A. Vesselo . 97
Cavalcanti, Alberto
Function of the Art Director . 75
Jean Vigo 86
Ces Messieurs de la Santé . . 54
Chaplin's New Film
Mack Schwab . . . 88
Colour and Emotion
Rouben Mamoulian . . 225
Continental Imports
J. S. Fairfax-Jones . . 104, 179
Courant, Curt
Function of the Camera-man . 22
Crime without Passion . . . 50
David Copperfield . . . 173
Dawn to Dawn 54
Definitions in Cinema
Clifford Leech . . . 79
Dernier Milliardaire, Le . . 112
Deutschland Zwischen Gestern und Heute 113
Devil is a Woman . . . 241
Disney Exhibition
Arthur Shearsby . . . 165
Dr. Mabuse 49
Dood Wasser 182
Dyer, Ernest
Function of the Camera-man . 22

Editorial. Norman Wilson 3, 67, 131, 191
Escape Me Never 176
Evasive Documentary
David Schrire . . . 7
John Grierson . . . 10
Experiments in Counterpoint
Herbert Read . . . 17

Fairfax-Jones, J. S.
Continental Imports . 104, 179
Film Abroad . . . 30, 92, 155
Film Archives 220
Film Critic of To-day and To-morrow. Rudolf Arnheim . 203
Film Lecturing in Canada
Jenny Brown . . . 226
Film Societies . . 55, 122, 183, 242
Films in Paris. Alexander Werth . 30
Films of the Quarter . 39, 103, 168, 231
For All Eternity 178
Forgotten Men 119
Function of the Actor
Richard Griffith . . . 139
Function of the Art Director
Alberto Cavalcanti . . 75
Function of the Camera-man
Curt Courant, Ernest Dyer . 22

Gibbon, Lewis Grassic
Novelist Looks at Cinema . 81
Great Expectations . . . 173
Grierson, John
Bruce Woolfe, Rotha and *Rising Tide* 37
Evasive Documentary . . 10
Two Paths to Poetry . . 194
Griffith, Richard
Function of the Actor . . 139

Hardy, Forsyth
Films of the Quarter 39, 103, 168, 231

I.C.E. Rudolf Arnheim . . 95
Independent Film-maker 59, 125, 186

India on the Screen
R. J. Minney 162
Iron Duke 114
Italy's "International" Institute
G. F. Noxon 12
Itto 182

Jew Suss 44

Klingender, F. D.
New Deal and the American Film 197

Leech, Clifford
Definitions in Cinema . . 79
Leigh, Walter
Musician and the Film . . 70
Little Friend 51
Little Man, What Now? . . 54
Lot in Sodom 52

Mamoulian, Rouben
Colour and Emotion . . 225
Man Who Knew Too Much . . 114
Marie 114
Men and Jobs 108
Minney, R. J.
India on the Screen . . 162
Miserables, Les 111
Musician and the Film
Walter Leigh 70
Mystery of Edwin Drood . . 173

Nairne, Campbell
Writer's Approach to Cinema . 134
National Production in Belgium
Ludo Patris 219
Nell Gwyn 46
New Abstract Process
Claire Parker and A. Alexeieff 34
New Deal and the American Film.
F. D. Klingender 197
New Trends in Soviet Cinema—I .
Marie Seton 149
New Trends in Soviet Cinema—II 210
Night on the Bare Mountain . . 53
Novelist Looks at Cinema
Lewis Grassic Gibbon . . 81
Noxon, G. F.
Italy's "International" Institute 12

Old Curiosity Shop 173
Orient Cruise Films 119

Parker, Claire, and A. Alexeieff
New Abstract Process . . 34
Pasinetti, P. M.
Sixty-six Films in a Lido Hotel 14
Patris, Ludo
National Production in Belgium 219
Post Haste 120
Private Life of Don Juan . . 53
Private Life of the Gannets . . 182

Read, Herbert
Experiments in Counterpoint . 17
Ruggles of Red Gap . . . 181

Sanders of the River . . . 175
Scarlet Pimpernel 114
Scenario. Ernest Betts . . 160
Schwab, Mack. Film Abroad . 31
Seton, Marie
New Trends in Soviet Cinema—I 149
New Trends in Soviet Cinema—II 210
Shearsby, Arthur
Artist and the Film . . 143
Disney Exhibition . . . 165
Shipyard 177
Schrire, David
Evasive Documentary . . 7
Sixty-six Films in a Lido Hotel
P. M. Pasinetti 14
Song of Ceylon 109

Thirty-nine Steps 241
Treasure Island 54
Two Paths to Poetry
John Grierson 194

Vesselo, A. Camera Movement . 97
Vigo. Alberto Cavalcanti . . 86

Wagner and Film. Dallas Bower . 27
Wedding Night 181
Weinberg, Herman G.
American Screen 216
Film Abroad 157
Werth, Alexander. Films in Paris 30
Wharves and Strays . . . 182
Wilson, Norman. Editorial 3, 67, 131, 191
Workers and Jobs 182
Writer's Approach to Cinema
Campbell Nairne . . . 134